

National Bison Range Celebrates International Migratory Bird Day

You are invited to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with the National Bison Range on Saturday, May 8, 2004. Take this opportunity to enjoy the great wildlife opportunities found at the Refuge. To encourage you to visit, the Range is offering a number of family-oriented activities for the day.

The big event for the day is the opening of Red Sleep Mountain Drive for the summer season. This is a 19-mile, one-way gravel road which climbs 2,000 feet to the high point of the Range and descends along steep, 10%-graded hills. Because it travels through a variety of habitats, including grassland and forest, the Drive is a good place to see a broad spectrum of birds, as well as abundant wildlife. The Range is open by 7:00 a.m. Visitors will need to start the drive by 6:00 p.m. to complete the trip before the Refuge closes as dark. Fees are charged for all scenic drives.

For those who want to share the experience with other bird watchers, the Range has a few guided programs scheduled. The Backcountry Bird Adventure starts at 8:00 a.m. Participants will have the opportunity to look for forest birds in the higher regions of the Refuge. For those wanting to discover the joys of bird watching, attend the Beginning Bird Walk starting at 8:30 a.m. to learn about the more easily seen birds around the Nature Trail. Both trips have limited space so **preregistration is required**. Please call the National Bison Range at (406) 644-2211, extension 207 to register.

Bluebird enthusiasts can join Erv Davis at noon at the Visitor Center for a talk about bluebird habitat and houses. Erv has been a valued volunteer at the National Bison Range for many years now, keeping track of the numerous bluebird boxes located here and throughout the valley.

Wildlife photographer and author Donald M. Jones will be on hand to sign his book, Montana Wildlife Portfolio, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Then join him from 3 to 4 p.m. for his program, "Nature Photography, Spring Composition." Registration for Don's photo walk is required, so call 406/644-2211 extension 207.

Additional activities include special bird video showings, information on backyard bird feeding, trivia contests, free posters, coloring pages and a book sale.

International Migratory Bird Day is an annual event to celebrate and support migratory bird conservation. The theme for IMBD 2004 is the conservation of colonial-nesting birds, such as the Great Blue Heron, a large wading bird frequently seen in the wetlands around the National Bison Range. For more events happening throughout the nation, check out <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit the Service home page at www.fws.gov.

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